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SHOOLMAN GRADUATE SCHOOL RECEIVES NLM FOUNDATION GRANT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Photo courtesy Etgar L'Noar

The Torah teaches not to put "a stumbling block before the blind." But only recently have Jewish educational institutions begun to respond fully to this *mitzvah*—enabling students with special needs to be included and to achieve success in the Jewish classroom.



Etgar L'Noar ("Children's Challenge") in Newton is among several area special needs programs that employ Hebrew College-trained special educators. Here, a teen volunteer works with a young student.

Facilitating that process, in April, the Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation (NLM) of Chestnut Hill, Mass., awarded a \$150,000 grant to Hebrew College to provide new scholarships for students in the College's Jewish special education program as well as for students with special needs who wish to study here.

In 2000, the College's Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education initiated one of the few professional training programs in the field of Jewish special education, a certificate and master's specialization curriculum that presents teaching and evaluation methodology within a framework of Jewish values. Graduates work in a variety of Jewish special education settings, providing structured Jewish learning

experiences and Hebrew language instruction to students with a range of physical, developmental and cognitive disabilities.

The NLM grant will create two \$5,000, two-year graduate student fellowships to support study and research into the Jewish educational needs of students with learning disabilities. In addition, the gift will establish an endowed scholarship fund in honor of former Hebrew College student Peter A. Lurie to enable students with developmental disabilities to attend the College.

To improve community awareness of special education needs in the Jewish community, the gift will also support an educational symposium for community professionals. An outreach effort targeting families with special needs children and adults will provide information about educational and scholarship opportunities at Hebrew College.

The Foundation's mission is to foster the inclusion of individuals with special needs in Jewish learning environments. Chair and Founder Nancy Lurie Marks is a pioneering advocate and leader in the field of research and treatment for individuals with autism.

Since its inception, the Jewish special education program at Hebrew College has been a community effort. A partnership with the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston, the program is also supported by the Sherman Family Trust and Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

"Inclusiveness in Jewish life and Jewish learning is a sacred responsibility," says President David M. Gordis. "We are grateful to the Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation for making it possible for Hebrew College to substantially expand its work in this field and to raise the issue of education for special needs children and adults to a high Jewish community priority."

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